

Revealing Two Other Rejected Peace Feelers from Hanoi, P. 2

Two Items Which Set the Military and Political Scene for the New Year

'The crux of that [the military situation] is that American and South Vietnamese forces hold less territory than they did a year ago despite the growth of the American forces.'

—Jack Foisie from Saigon in *Washington Post* Dec. 26

"A Freshman House Democrat from the Midwest, typical

of three score first-termers on whom the White House depended for its 1965 majorities, reports: 'I went back home to tell my people about aid to education and depressed areas and sick people, but with the exception of a few, all they wanted to hear about was Vietnam'."

—*Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 27

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15 CENTS

What Johnson's Herald Angels Sing

The painful fact which emerges from a close study of reactions at home and abroad to the Johnson peace offensive is that no one really believes in its sincerity. At home the hawks see it as a clever maneuver to disarm the peace movement. Abroad it is generally regarded as the prelude to a wider war. The Johnson Administration had a simple way to correct this impression. A declaration that it was prepared to accept the National Liberation Front as one of the parties to a negotiation would have indicated that the U.S. was serious in its search for peace. Even a European paper as far right as Belgium's Catholic-conservative *Libre Belgique* put its finger on the continued unwillingness to deal with the NLF as "the weak point of the American position." (*Washington Star*, Jan. 4). This does not require acceptance of the NLF as sole representative of the South Vietnamese; the Saigon government and the neutralist Buddhists are also entitled (on the Laotian model) to a place. But to negotiate the settlement of any war, one must deal with the enemy one is fighting.

The Same Promises We Broke Before

The President, in one of the 14 points being circulated by the State Department at home and abroad, is quoted as saying cryptically that if North Vietnam stopped its "aggression," the "Viet Cong would not have difficulty being represented." * But if this is true, why not say openly and unambiguously that we will negotiate with them? Instead Secretary Rusk in his December 30 interview with Canadian Broadcasting Company asked the Viet Cong to "lay down their arms, accept amnesty, engage in free elections." They did lay down their arms in 1954, they were guaranteed an amnesty in the Geneva agreement. Despite this, many were executed and others thrown into concentration camps. The promised elections were never held. How often can you sell the Brooklyn Bridge to the very same sucker? The fact is that the Administration has indicated here and in Saigon that it does not intend to agree to any settlement which would give the NLF or the Viet Cong any voice in the future government of South Vietnam. That would, by the Administration's definition, still leave South Vietnam open to "subversion" or "indirect aggres-

Quite An Admission

Saigon, Dec. 31 (AP)—What would peace now mean in Vietnam? . . . U.S. and Vietnamese officials alike are considering these questions. . . . Even the start of peace talks could undermine or destroy the U.S. backed government in Saigon. . . . Premier Nguyen Cao Ky is known to oppose strongly any negotiations at this time. He said recently that he wanted the U.S. to invade North Vietnam and Cambodia in order to press the war even more vigorously. . . . The Vietnam war essentially is a political struggle for the allegiance of people. . . . As Saigon authorities see it, a cease-fire would favor the Communists. Doubt is expressed that the present government—a military dictatorship—could last long in an atmosphere of peace. Yet no one on the horizon favorable to U.S. interests enjoys any measure of public support.

—*Washington Post*, Jan. 1, this dispatch concluded that "many in the South" who are "neither anti nor pro-Communist admire and respect Ho Chi Minh."

sion." But "unconditional discussions" hedged by the condition that we will not deal directly with those we are actually fighting nor make any concession to them is tantamount to a demand for their surrender. This is why the peace offensive does not look real even to our friends and allies.

One of the countries visited by the emissaries Mr. Johnson has flown out dramatically all around the globe was Canada. Last April its Prime Minister Pearson was one of the first to suggest a pause in the bombardment of North Vietnam as a prelude to negotiations. One would have expected him to be especially pleased by the new pause and the peace offensive. Ottawa was impressed neither by the visit of McGeorge Bundy to Ottawa nor by the 45-minute telephone conversation between President and Prime Minister in which it culminated, perhaps because Mr. Bundy had not been persuasive enough. *Le Monde's* Ottawa correspondent reported (Jan. 1) that the Canadian government afterward "minimized the importance of the surprise visit" and saw no change in Washington's policy. That dispatch revealed another instance of the way in which our top officials seem more anxious to foreclose than to find loopholes for negotiation. Blair Seaborn, Canada's representative last year on the International Control Commis-

(Continued on Page Two)

* Though all Goldberg would say at a UN press conference Jan. 5 as we go to press is that the Viet Cong "point of view" would be represented at the conference table.

The rebels control two-thirds of South Vietnam and their leadership embraces a broad cross-section including many non-Communists. They cannot be expected to permit Moscow, Peking, Hanoi or anyone else to do their negotiating for them. Nor can they be expected to accept any settlement that does not give them a reasonable opportunity to share in the postwar government—a government which ultimately should be determined by the Vietnamese people in an honorably supervised election. Refusing to negotiate with the rebel front would have its parallel if King George III had expressed a willingness to negotiate with France while refusing to talk with George Washington and his rebel forces.

—Sen. Geo. McGovern (D., S. Dak.) Jan. 5

(Continued from Page One)

sion and one of our chief intermediaries in talking with Hanoi last year, took part in the talks with Mr. Bundy. One of the things we wanted him to find out for us was whether the famous Four Points were actual conditions for negotiations. Last June Mr. Seaborn reported that he could obtain no precise response. *Le Monde's* dispatch from Ottawa discloses that the Canadian diplomat gathered the impression "that the evasive responses of Hanoi indicated the desire of the North Vietnamese leaders to sound out the possibilities of compromise directly with American representatives." The U.S. chose to place the more pessimistic interpretation on Hanoi's attitude, perhaps because as Ambassador Lodge was saying about that time (*Meet the Press*, May 23) negotiations would be "disastrous" and Mr. Johnson's offer of "unconditional discussions" at Baltimore a few weeks earlier was only intended to put the onus on the other side.

Two "Signals" We Ignored

Though Mr. Rusk claims to have had his antenna alert for months to any possible "signal" from the other side, this and many other signals for diplomatic exploration and negotiation have been ignored. In the wake of the Seaborn inquiries, there were two other signals from Hanoi last year which the State Department brushed aside. These have since come to the attention of a group of newspapermen here, including myself, but have not been discussed in print. The first signal was the formal response given by Ho Chi Minh in *Le Monde* last August 14 to questions put him by the noted French historian of Vietnam, M. Philippe Devillers, who seemed to commute last year between Washington and Hanoi. Last July, according to *Le Monde*, "certain American sources" had decided seriously to study the Four Points. The questions Ho answered sounded like requests by Washington at elucidation. Two important points came out of Ho's answers. One was that he was not insisting on immediate reunification, but was prepared to accept indefinitely the existence of an autonomous South Vietnam if neutral and if it maintained "fraternal" relations with the North. The other was that Ho was not demanding immediate U.S. troop withdrawal and was prepared to negotiate "the conditions and guarantees" of U.S. disengagement if Washington gave "tangible proof" that it accept-

mately should be determined by the Vietnamese people in an honorably supervised election. Refusing to negotiate with the rebel front would have its parallel if King George III had expressed a willingness to negotiate with France while refusing to talk with George Washington and his rebel forces.

How The Viet Cong Saw The Truce

"Said one authoritative Vietnamese, 'You can't expect Asians to observe their opponent's unilateral decision, they would lose face. The Viet Cong's own 12 hour cease-fire like last year's was to allow the Catholic peasants and soldiers to attend Christmas mass in the village churches. It had nothing to do with American troops. The Americans are trying to impress world opinion while the Viet Cong's propaganda is almost entirely aimed at a psychological effect among the Vietnamese, even when targets are American installations. The Viet Cong didn't violate the American cease-fire, they just ignored it.'"

—Critchfield from Saigon, *Wash. Star*, Dec. 27

ed the principles embodied in the Four Points.

A second move which Hanoi regarded as a peaceful signal came several weeks later. Secretary Rusk had said several times that the U.S. would stop bombing the North if it would make some comparable "de-escalation" such as withdrawing the 325th Division from South Vietnam. On September 21, Richard Dudman in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and Bernard Gwertzman in the *Washington Star* disclosed on the basis of a briefing that U.S. intelligence reported there had been no contact in recent weeks with the 325th Division. The briefing—significantly—was not in the State Department, which at once knocked down these stories. The Department's spokesman, Robert J. McCloskey admitted that the 325th had not been "engaged in activities," according to the *Washington Star* Sept. 24, but said they were "believed to be still there." Just what made the Department believe they were still there was not explained; perhaps Mr. Rusk's antenna detected them rustling in the jungle foliage. All this was very confusing at the time, and the Department was given the benefit of the doubt; now it appears on reliable authority that the 325th was withdrawn at the time. Washington's failure to keep its promise and reciprocate by calling off the bombing was regarded as proof of insincerity by Hanoi.

This record, like Washington's treatment of the Four Points, can hardly create confidence. These Four Points, Ho said in his cable to Pope Paul are merely a restatement of the 1954 Geneva pact. Washington disagrees only on Point 3. Though

Despite Those Sour Headlines, There Was A Christmas Truce in Vietnam

Lai Khe, South Vietnam—"It was so quiet last night I couldn't sleep for the silence." Capt. Jay Franz of Denver, Colo., an engineering officer with the 1st Infantry Division, was describing the eerie silence that has descended on Vietnam's battlefield since the 30-hour Christmas cease-fire went into effect at 6 p.m. Friday. This reporter flew in a helicopter over the 1st Division's entire perimeter north and west of Saigon in the lethal rubber plantation country, scene of several recent bitter battles, and experienced some of the strange silence that Franz spoke of. No convoys moved along the dusty roads, where in past weeks several have been ambushed. No fighters or bombers screamed off

from the big air bases at Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa.

The Iron Triangle, a jungle area north of Saigon where several regiments of Viet Cong reportedly are dug in, stretched green and serene under a merciless Christmas sun that kept the temperature in the high 90s. Officers of the 3rd Brigade sat down to Christmas dinner in the lovely main house of an abandoned rubber plantation without the percussive accompaniment of the big 175s and 105 howitzers that usually bang away on the edge of the airstrip. "For once," said Maj. John Efferson of Centralia, Ill., "the windows aren't rattling and the ceiling plaster isn't falling into the soup." —AP in the *Washington Star*, Dec. 25

the press has been encouraged to report Point 3 as handing over South Vietnam to the Viet Cong, all it says is that "the internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves, in accordance with the program of the NLF without any foreign interference." In the memorandum prepared for Vice President Humphrey's trip abroad it is said that this "would require the imposition of the program of the liberation front upon South Vietnam, whether the South Vietnamese wanted it or not." This reflects the State Department's genius for distortion. The NLF program calls for election of "a new National Assembly through universal suffrage" and for the establishment of free press, opinion and assembly. After 12 years of financing dictatorship in South Vietnam, the U.S. government does not enhance its reputation by trying to make it appear that the NLF program is somehow undemocratic. The NLF program is so broad and general in its principles of democracy, land reform, neutrality and amnesty as to allow ample room for honorable negotiation and guarantees of a free regime if we were looking for real negotiation.

Preparing For Wider War

The peace offensive seems to be a pantomime with wholly different purposes. The bill for the Vietnamese war is growing by huge increments. Last May Mr. Johnson had to ask Congress for a supplementary appropriation of \$700,000,000; in July he went back for an extra \$1.7 billion. Now it is disclosed that Mr. Johnson must ask for another \$12 to \$13 billion more for the current fiscal year to meet the rising costs of the war. If that is how much the war is costing us in South Vietnam, it will cost many times more when extended—as we seem on the verge of doing—to Laos, Cambodia and Thailand, not to speak of China. It was a political necessity to seem at least to make every effort for peace before presenting so monstrous a bill to Congress. It's not just the peace movement, it's the fiscal conservatives who are worrying the Administration. This little war is adding up to a very large bill.

Abroad the peace offensive must be seen against the background of the reports by Rusk and McNamara to NATO in December. The accounts filtering out of that meeting in Paris

Withholding the Truth on Weapon Losses

In our reply to the State Department's White Paper last March 8, we pointed out that the government's own figures indicated only about 2½% of the Viet Cong's weapons were of Soviet bloc origin. Now in checking at the Pentagon on the year-end tally of weapons losses in 1965, we learn that information on the origin of captured weapons has been classified. A press officer implied that most of the guns were Chinese imitations of Russian models. If this were true it would support the case for stronger action against China. We assume the Viet Cong have been getting more outside aid but we suspect the figures have been classified because they would show that the number of Chinese and other Soviet bloc weapons are still smaller than those the guerrillas get from our side. The weapons loss figures for last year (see UPI tally, Washington Post Jan. 2) also omit weapons losses by U.S. troops; this, too, has been classified. The figures given for South Vietnamese Army weapon losses are hard to believe. The Pentagon tally for 1964 showed 4900 weapons captured from the guerrillas and 13,700 lost to them; a surplus in their favor of 8,800. This year's tally shows 14,690 captured from them and 15,972 lost to them, or a surplus in their favor of only 1,282. Considering the increase in fighting, the sharp rise in weapons captured from the guerrillas is credible, but the slight rise in weapons lost to them is not. A footnote to the table says cryptically, "U.S. authorities refused to list the exact number of weapons lost." We have no trouble at all in believing that the figures are not exact.

made them sound like the apocalyptic Air Force bomber Generals, ready to take on China. As *Le Monde* said Dec. 18 the way they talked of the Chinese peril indicated Washington had little illusion about the possibility of a peaceful settlement and was embarking on a war of great dimensions "without knowing where escalation would stop." Our surmise, looking at Johnson's various jet-age angels, is that Humphrey's mission was to drum up Asian troops; Harriman's to warn the East European Communists to keep hands off; McNamara's and Rusk's to shake our NATO allies out of their indifference to our obsession with China, and Goldberg's to try and persuade the Pope of the purity of our intentions as we move giddily along the brink.

One Place Where Non-Whites Get More Than Their Share: The Draft for Vietnam

The New York Times has scooped us. For some time we have noticed what seemed an unusually large number of Negro soldiers in pictures from the Vietnamese battlefields and in the obituary page notices of soldiers killed in the war. Our inquiries at the Pentagon produced only a run-around. All we could get were overall figures. One was that Negroes were about 8% of the fighting men in Vietnam; no breakdown could be obtained as between the Navy and the Air Force, which prefer whites, and the Army, which depends on the draft. Similarly, on the ratio of Negro casualties we could get only an over-all figure of 7%. "If it is true," we asked one press officer, "that most Negroes serve in the Army, where casualties are higher, how is it that the percentage of Negro casualties is less than the average of Negroes in the armed services?" "I don't know," was the huffy reply, "and frankly I'm not interested."

We seemed to have reached a dead end. Then on January 3 the New York Times came up with a basic figure. It revealed that in the 12 months ended last June, 16.3% of the men drafted into the Army were non-white, though the percentage of non-whites in the general population is only

11%. The figures were elicited in an interview which seemed designed to give publicity to the fact that the Pentagon now has an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civil Rights and Industrial Relations, Jack Moscovitz. The reason non-whites are drafted more than whites is that more white boys have the money to qualify for deferment by staying on in graduate schools. The story did not provide casualty figures, but it did disclose that only 3.5% of the Negroes in the Army, 1.5% in the Air Force and 0.3% in the Navy were officers.

To a large part of the world the Vietnamese war is the last attempt of a white nation to maintain a dominant role in East Asia, the last stand of white colonialism. The essence of colonialism is the humiliation of a non-white people so that its labor power can be utilized cheaply by a dominant white people. That also describes the position in our society of most non-whites, whether Negroes, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans or American Indians. Non-whites generally get less pay and less employment. They get more only of the dirty work of our society, and it now appears that they are also getting more than their proportionate share of the sacrifice in the Vietnamese war.

Journalist Says Even Genocidal Tactics Won't Give U.S. Victory in Vietnam

Fernand Gigon, a Swiss journalist, who has been in Indochina no less than 18 times, author of a book "China Faces Failure" highly critical of the Communist regime, has just published in Paris a new book on Vietnam, "Les Américains face au Vietcong" based on a visit last summer, which stigmatizes the American conduct of the war as barbarous. Here, from an interview in the Dec. 1 issue of Le Nouvel Observateur and in a box from the book itself we present a glimpse of his conclusions and revelations:

Q. In the months to come, what would be the "ideal" strategy for the Americans?

A. The strategy of the scorched earth. Regroup the population termed democratic in the governmental zones and reduce life everywhere else to zero. In other words, obtain victory on the ground by genocide. The military in Saigon envisage this with perfect coolness. In Washington, they hesitate; such a policy would make the Americans lose the "good will" on which they set such store, already seriously damaged, and make the champions of liberty appear the equal of the Nazis. . . .

Anyhow, if the policy of the scorched earth were applied, the Vietcong would disappear only to reappear later, in cells of three or four men, and resume their harrassments, ambushes, etc. One cannot kill an idea with bombs, the Vietcong declare themselves ready to win the war 12 or 15 years hence: at that time they could put into application the four points of General Giap to prepare a general insurrection. But it is absolutely inconceivable that a Western army could remain in Asia for such a space of time.

Q. Have you been able to establish whether the Vietcong do live "among the people like a fish in water?"

A. Yes. A French priest told me the following story. At 80 kilometers from Saigon, in a camp occupied and defended by Americans, the Vietcong asked him (and he agreed and did) to celebrate a midnight mass at 10 p.m. in the same church where two hours later, he was going to celebrate the rite for the governmental forces. . . . Everywhere the Vietcong have contacts with the population, even inside entrenched camps. . . . And each month, eight to ten thousand South Vietnamese soldiers join the Communist camp.

Some U.S. Pilots Rebel at Genocide

"In the army itself, officer pilots, begin to desert their mission for moral reasons. They thought they were to make war, that is to drown troops with napalm and fire, risking flak in accordance with a conventional scheme of attack and counter-strike into which no moral considerations entered. But they found themselves being used to burn villages, to set rice harvests afire, to destroy forests and to reduce to ashes everything living, human or animal, in ever greater areas. There is something vile in the gratuitousness of attacks by the Strategic Air Command which orders up to 310 raids in a single day or sends 50 B-52s at a time against defenseless objectives. This clay pigeon shoot, inhuman, demented, would perhaps have some justification if it hastened the end of the conflict. But we're nowhere near in sight. Every now and then a conscience awakens. 'It is no longer war,' officers with qualms of conscience say, 'it is genocide.' Mounting moral confusion and religious conviction often lead them to the threshold of revolt; they ask to be relieved. . . .

"The General Staff makes these conscientious objectors sign a new declaration in which the pilots promise on their return to the United States to reveal neither the reasons for their desertion nor the scenes to which they have been witness. Without publicity, the officer is for the time being reduced in rank and his military privileges are taken from him. He returns to his country more solitary than if in a desert. Some find themselves in psychiatric clinics."

—Fernand Gigon: *Les Américains face au Vietcong* (Paris) Flammarion, 1965, pps. 151-2.

Q. The solution of the war, can it then be found only in negotiation?

A. That is plain. I am no Communist and I am Swiss, so I always feel above the battle. But for me, there is no doubt: This war cannot be won by the Americans. They make a big mistake in refusing to recognize the political reality of the Vietcong. . . . The final step of escalation—I am deeply convinced of it—would be world war. . . . The first bomb which falls on China would unleash the intervention of Russia. . . . Sino-Soviet differences are enormous, of course, but they are within the family of Marxism.

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